What is a Partnership?

For purposes within the Forest Service, "**partnerships**" are often broadly defined as relationships between the people, organizations, agencies, and communities that work together and share interests. The Forest Service regularly works in partnership with other entities, including: tribes, states, federal agencies, non-profits, businesses and communities.

However, it is important to understand that the world "partnership" also has a more precise meaning according to federal policy. Federal policy defines partnerships as "arrangements that are voluntary, mutually beneficial and entered into for the purpose of mutually agreed upon objectives." In this definition, "mutual benefit" specifically means that each partner shares in the benefits the projects provides.

The Forest Service also frequently works with partners through informal activities that may serve as springboard for formal arrangements later. For example, many agency employees participate in community networks to offer educational events and share skills and expertise with local citizen without a formal, documented arrangement. In practice, this broadens the meaning of partnership beyond the specific definition under federal policy and beyond formal arrangements.

Why partner?

Partnerships can be established for many reasons. Through these critical connections, relationships and increasing trust, we:

- Broaden mutual benefit and support towards mission activities
- Connect managers to other government/public programs to maximize effectiveness
- Conserve public lands and resources
- Establish links among the agency and stakeholders
- Facilitate an understanding of the Forest Service mission, mandates, and goals
- Facilitate cross-boundary solutions to broad conservation challenges
- Help to efficiently meet our agency mission
- Linking agency change and advocacy functions for greater impact
- Minimize the potential for contradictory activities between the Forest Service and other agencies and partners
- Promote public educational activities
- Share information and resources
- Strengthen local NGOs and others' capacity as development vehicles
- Strengthen the institution (finances, technical capacity)

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